

Reboot the world

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Comment

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IN the next few days, Malaysia is poised for another turning point.

This will mark another milestone for Malaysia's future in its journey towards Wawasan 2020 -- a vision carved out some 20 years ago to realise an advanced nation status.

We have completed more than two-thirds of the sojourn and have faced major challenges along the way. But we have also chalked up many achievements that have given us the strength to see us through the next decade!

Now we have 1Malaysia to add value to Wawasan 2020. In many ways the nine challenges of Wawasan 2020 are neatly encapsulated in the 1Malaysia aspiration, giving it the clarity it needs. It acts like a booster for the last 10-year sprint as it were, with impetus coming from the New Economic Model (NEM) to be announced on Tuesday.



As we wait to hear details of the NEM, it is important to recapitulate some of the points that I have raised in this column.

First and foremost, the world around us has changed and dramatically too! The change is no longer incremental in nature but a transformational one. It is therefore contextualised in different game plans where innovation -- both technical and social must go hand-in-hand.

It is also about speed and taking risk, be it in decision-making and implementation. It is about moving out of our comfort zone as we challenge existing assumptions in an attempt to create a better future. Indeed, some say we need to reboot the world.

Secondly, for this to happen, the prevailing mindset is the main obstacle that must first be overcome. The smartest, most successful and powerful among us are often the culprits. They are usually the last to welcome change because they have the most to lose!

Being mainly in positions of power and influence, and with the clout to lobby, they can be major stumbling blocks to meaningful transformation. Still, this is the first group to "leave" should anything go wrong!

So the inertia for change is tremendous unless you are convinced that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Our task then is to ensure that the "light" shines as bright as possible. A deeper understanding of the NEM in the context of 1Malaysia and Wawasan 2020 is crucial.

Thirdly, under the present circumstances, economics alone will not make the required change. The New Economic Model must go beyond economics. Predicated on the spirit of "people first", it must move beyond numbers and percentage points. It must have a significant "intangible" component -- a soul as such.

And that soul is the essence of humanity -- grounded on ethics, integrity and being humane. It is therefore not enough to talk about moving up the value chain if humanity is not part of it.

As it is often reiterated, it is about translating the notion of human capital into all-round human beings so we will not be caught in a modern-day "slavery" and even larger disparities and divides, which are a stark contradiction to the spirit of 1Malaysia and the idea of Wawasan 2020.

Next, it is about being able to hold our heads high as a country with a difference.

All too often Malaysia tries hard to blend in with others even at the expense of our uniqueness as a nation, without realising that we are "different" in a variety of ways.

Instead of using this to leverage our position, we more often than not are apologetic for being different based on our heritage and multi-dimensional make-up.

We lose our competitive edge. The Truly Asia branding stops at tourism and does not extend into other sectors. We are too busy copying others in the hope to be accepted into their circles rather than redefining our own as advocated under Wawasan 2020.

The NEM should be a stepping stone to help us define our Blue Ocean strategy by capitalising on our uniqueness.

Ultimately, the prerequisite for an advanced nation status is a progressive political mindset and behaviour. This could prove the most challenging change of them all!

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